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Reminiscences

1780-1814

Letters written by Major Myers, 13th Infy., U. S. Army, to his son, containing incidents of the War of 1812-14.

Printed for Private Circulation.

One hundred copies only of this pamphlet have been printed.

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Presented to [illegible]

Reminiscences

1780 to 1814

812-14

Army

Errata.

Page 36, third paragraph, and fourth line, Colonel Butler should read Colonel Boerstler.

Page 37, fifth line, Butler should read Boerstler.

Reminiscences

1780 to 1814

INCLUDING INCIDENTS IN THE WAR OF 1812-14

LETTERS PERTAINING TO HIS EARLY LIFE

Written by MAJOR MYERS, 13th Infantry, U. S. Army

TO

HIS SON

THE CRANE COMPANY
1411 G ST
WASHINGTON D C
1900

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN BY MAJOR MYERS,

PERTAINING TO HIS EARLY LIFE.

SCHENECTADY, *February 21, 1853.*

MY DEAR SON:—

In accordance with your expressed wish, I will give you a condensed outline of the events of my long and varied life, beginning with a short account of family affairs. My father was a Hungarian, and my mother an Austrian, by birth. They sailed from Helvoetsluys, in Holland, and arrived in New York in the year 1750. They soon after removed to Newport, where I was born on the 31st of May, 1776—two months before the signing of The Declaration of Independence. My father spoke and wrote all the living languages, and, at Newport, he became the friend of the Rev. Dr. Styles, afterwards President of Yale College. In November, 1776, before having reached his fortieth year, my father died, beloved and respected by all who knew him.

The British evacuated Newport in 1779, and, in 1780, my mother decided to return to New York. The winter of this year was known long after as the "hard winter." The snow was deeper than it had ever been known to be before on the Continent; and I have seen nothing like it since. The Bay of New York was so firmly frozen over that the British marched troops and removed heavy guns on the ice to Staten Island. We lived quietly in New York until 1783, when Great Britain was compelled, by her own necessities, and by the persevering bravery of the Americans, to acknowledge the American Colonies to be free and independent States. Preparations were being made to withdraw the forces, and the British, in common justice to those Americans who, unfortunately for themselves, had embraced the British cause, offered homes in Nova Scotia to all who would sign Articles of Association. My mother agreed to this, and early in May we left New York in a British ship for our new home. We spent several happy years in Nova Scotia, where a pleasant society was formed. Our nearest neighbors were Captain Richard Lippincott and his wife, a Quaker. He had been a Captain in the British Army, and, as such, he was ordered, sometime in the year 1782, to exchange the American

Captain Huddy, then a prisoner at New York, for a British officer of equal rank, who was to be delivered to him on the Jersey shore at, or near, Bergen Point; but, on the way, he landed at Gibbet Island, and ordered his prisoner to prepare for death.

Huddy considered it a jest, and endeavored to laugh it off; but Lippincott directed his Negro servant to prepare a halter, and Huddy was actually hung to a limb of a tree. Lippincott then returned to New York, of course, without the British officer whom he should have brought in the place of Huddy.

Great excitement was felt in New York, as well as in the American camp. Lippincott was arrested and imprisoned, and General Washington demanded his delivery to the Americans, but was answered that the trial would take place under British law. All expected the condemnation and execution of the criminal, but, at about this time, the Treaty of Peace was signed and ratified, whereby our independence was acknowledged, and Lippincott was either acquitted or pardoned, when he went to Nova Scotia. There was a story current at that time about the notorious Benedict Arnold. He had become a merchant in St. Johns, and, in connection with Monson Hoyt, had imported largely from England, not knowing what would be required in the new country. Consequently, he accumulated a large quantity of unsalable goods, which were, however, highly insured in England. It is said that he hired a woman, for a new dress, to set fire to the building in which his goods were stored. But the plot was discovered at the trial for the recovery of the insurance, and Arnold was obliged to leave the country.

In 1787 we returned to New York. On the voyage we stopped at New Haven, where we received an additional passenger—Captain John Paul Jones. I remember him as a man of medium height, rather stout and well set, with dark hair and eyes. In conversation, free and easy; and in manner, rather bombastic. He seemed to me to look more like a German than a Scotchman. At New Haven I saw a young man tied to a post and publicly whipped for horse-stealing.

I had seen, when in New York, Hessian Soldiers run the gauntlet; and a man under the "mild and humane" British Laws, standing in the pillory, cropped and branded for stealing a loaf of bread from a baker's window.

In New York we took a house owned by the excellent Mr.

Randall. He had begun life a poor sailor boy; but, by his own exertions, he became a very rich merchant. He had been aided by a sea-faring man, and he amply returned the favors by leaving the bulk of his fortune to be used for the founding of an institution for the benefit of disabled and superannuated sailors. That fund forms the basis of the Sailors' Snug Harbor on Staten Island.

At this time, in the year 1787, New York contained 33,000 inhabitants. The city was still in rather a dilapidated state, not having, as yet, recovered from the effects of the war. The country was governed under the old Articles of Confederation formed during the Revolutionary War merely to establish a union of force and action without defining or limiting the rights or powers of the general government of the States. Our commerce, both foreign and domestic, was very small and much embarrassed. A vessel and cargo going from one State to another was compelled to clear, enter, and secure duties.

Each State had its proper currency which would not pass in the adjoining States; every kind of property was low and money scarce.

Lots of ground on Broadway between Grand and Great James Streets were sold at from twenty to twenty-five pounds; but corner lots were held at a little more than two pounds higher; in all the cross streets the price of lots was from ten to twelve pounds each. Flour was four dollars a barrel; beef, four cents per pound; butter, from eight to ten cents; a cart load of hickory wood, seven shillings, cartage or sawing, one shilling per load; and everything in proportion. What is now the Park was then an unfenced space, so muddy in wet weather that, to cross it, one must go ankle deep in mud. Where the City Hall now stands, was a range of wooden buildings one story high, with a common picket fence in front; this was the City and County Alms House. There was an unfinished stone building in range of the above on Broadway called the Bridewell; it was afterwards finished and used as a prison. On the left was the old Provost Prison of the Revolution, where many American prisoners were either hung in the cells by Cunningham, the cruel keeper; or were suffered to starve. After the peace, it became a debtors prison; then, it was newly modeled, as it now stands, the Hall of Records. There was scarcely a house in view west and north of that location, excepting the New York Hospital then in a dilapidated state, on Broadway. The new Constitution

of the United States had been agreed to in convention, but had not, as yet, been adopted by all the States. The French Revolution had burst forth, and party spirit ran high. Two great political parties were forming. Commodore Francis Nicholson was the first President of the Democratic Society, and Thomas Jefferson was its great leader. Alexander Hamilton lead the Federal party. Jefferson and the Democrats were jealous of the power of the President by the new Constitution; and they considered the office nearly equal to that of king. They feared the establishment of a concentrated, luxurious, and extravagant government; a great controlling political institution; and a union of Church and State. They believed that General Hamilton, Timothy Pickering, Oliver Wolcott and others were trying to introduce a limited monarchy in disguise. Among the propositions made to the Convention, General Hamilton suggested that senators should be elected for life, and that the President should choose his successor. Mobs and riots were common, the Democratic printing office of Greenleaf was attacked, and the type scattered in the street; but after great and long excitement, the Constitution was ratified by most of the States. The convention of this State (N. Y.), having peace, and the public interest in view, met at Newbury, and, after long debates, ratified the Constitution. At the same time, a declaration of Reserved State Rights was made, a copy of which may be found in the Assembly documents of 1833, placed there at my request, I having found the original in the office of the Secretary of State, after long search. George Washington was elected President of the United States, and all the States elected Congressmen, who now assembled at the old City Hall in New York—it stood on Wall Street, where the Custom House now stands. I recollect seeing Chancellor Livingstone administer the oath of office to General Washington on a Bible which is still in a state of good preservation, and in the possession of St. John's Lodge, No. 1, New York, where it is held as a relic of times past. Although the Constitution was adopted, and civil government in full force in America, and the revenue and property rising in value, the two great political parties existed.

The Federalists went so far as to invent a black cockade as a distinctive badge, and the Democrats, or Anti-Federalists, not adopting it, were often insulted, and even pushed off the pavement.

The greatest exertions were made by each party to elect its

members for the Legislature and Congress, and with varying success.

This continued until 1799, when the Democrats gained the ascendency; and, within a few years thereafter, we find thirteen amendments to the Constitution as originally adopted, all of which are in favor of civil liberty. The State Convention having ratified the Constitution of the United States accompanied by an instrument signed by all its members, and known as the Reserved Rights of the State of New York, both parties united in getting up a pageant such as had never been seen in New York. The corporation invited all the mechanical, civil, and charitable societies to appoint committees to make arrangements for a general procession. Each was allowed to make its own preparations, which were done on an extensive and brilliant plan. Early on the day appointed, each society assembled at the Battery.

The Governor, both branches of the Legislature, the judges, the members of the bar, the officers of the courts, officers of the army and navy, the Mayor and corporation, and other city officers, took part in the procession. All the mechanical trades were represented by men engaged at their respective occupations in cars mounted on trucks. The ship carpenters contributed a miniature frigate of thirty-six guns, completely rigged, armed, and manned. She was called the "United States," and commanded by Commodore Francis Nicholson. Her crew consisted of young lads dressed as sailors, her sails were loosed and sheeted home, and her guns were loaded and fired. This attracted great attention. During the day, the streets were crowded with people, and the houses were decorated with flags.

In the evening, Colonel Sebastian Bowman, a Prussian officer of the Revolution, and soon after appointed first postmaster of New York by General Washington, prepared extensive fire-works at the old fort, Bowling Green, and at other places. This was, I believe, the first exhibition of fire-works in New York. All places of amusement were opened and thronged. Most of the houses and public buildings were illuminated. It was near morning before the streets were again quiet. Thus was consummated the foundation of our excellent Civil Government, and the great Republic of thirteen free and independent United States.

Distraction to the brain that would conceive the idea of a

separation of the Union, and palsied the hand that would break one link of this Heaven-wrought chain!

The following few years of my life were spent in New York, and in Richmond, Virginia. During my residence in Richmond, I made many valuable acquaintances, among whom was Judge Wythe, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. He, and all his family, were poisoned by one of the household servants, a black boy, who had been treated rather as a pet than otherwise. The younger members of the family recovered, but the old gentleman died. The boy was hung; he prayed, and sang psalms under the gallows, and said that he had always been well treated by the family, but that the Devil had prompted him to do the wicked deed; and (as frequently happens in such cases) his Savior had appeared to him the night before, and pronounced his pardon.

I became an active politician just before the election of 1793, which put a period to the despotic reign of John Adams (the elder) and placed Thomas Jefferson in the Presidential Chair in the following year. The Federal party was composed in part of the old Tories of the Revolution, and the rich merchants and traders, who boasted of having all the wealth, talent, and respectability of the American people. Congress, under the Federal Administration, had passed several oppressive laws, abridging the public rights. The Alien and Sedition Laws were particularly objected to by the Democratic party. The President had power to transport or imprison, without trial, any suspected person, and he actually did imprison many valuable citizens, for speaking disrespectfully of him as an individual. Several of these were editors.

The warm partisans of the dominant party would neither deal with or employ those who differed from them in politics. All the offices from highest to lowest were held exclusively by the Federal party. Many of the merchants stooped so low as to discharge clerks, cartmen, and others who differed with them in politics. The measure of wrongs was filled to overflowing. The parties, numerically, were nearly equal; but the wealth and patronage were against the Democrats.

One evening three gentlemen met at the house of Brockholst Livingstone, in Broadway—Mr. Livingstone, General Morgan Lewis, and Aaron Burr. The wrongs of the people was the subject of conversation. Mr. Burr said, "We must, at the next election, put a period to this 'reign of terror.'" The others agreed that

this was desirable, but saw no way to bring it about. Mr. Burr said, "We must carry the City, and that will give us the majority in the Legislature; and the State of New York being Democratic, will carry the Union, and transfer to the Democrats all the power and patronage of the government."

The other gentlemen thought this a brilliant plan, but did not see how it would be possible to gain the ascendency in the City. Mr. Burr took pen and paper and made out an Assembly ticket, heading it with the names of Gov. George Clinton, Gen. Horatio Gates, Col. Willett, Henry Rutgers, Brockholst Livingstone, Ezekiel Robbins, Aaron Burr, etc., making the whole ticket eleven members. Mr. Livingstone observed that many of these gentlemen would not agree to serve, and that, if they should, it would not be easy to get them nominated and elected.

Mr. Burr requested the gentlemen to discuss the question in a week from that night; but he said, "Mr. Livingston, you and I can agree at once: I will agree to serve my Country on this occasion, and I am sure that you will not refuse." He answered, "No; if the rest will serve." The party separated, feeling great ardor in the cause.

In the course of the week, Mr. Burr called on all the other gentlemen, and with his usual eloquence, and argumentative powers, induced them all to serve. At the end of the week, the three gentlemen met according to agreement, and Mr. Burr reported the assent of all. He next proposed to call a general meeting at Tammany Hall, and said, "As soon as the room begins to fill up, I will nominate Daniel Smith as chairman, and put the question quickly. Daniel being in the chair, you must each nominate one member, I will nominate one, and Fairley, Miller, Van Wyck, and others will nominate, and Daniel must put the question quickly on the names, and, in this way, we will get them nominated. We must then have some inspiring speeches, close the meeting, and retire. We must then have a caucus and invite some of our most active and patriotic Democrats, both young and old, appoint meetings in the different wards, select speakers to address each, and keep up frequent meetings at Tammany Hall until the election. We will put down the monster Federalism, and bring the country back to pure Democratic principles." The whole plan succeeded, and the civil revolution was brought about.

I give you an account of what took place at Mr. Livingstone's

as it was related to me by Gen. Morgan Lewis, and of the after proceedings on my own authority—I being one of the actors. I accompanied Aaron Burr to several meetings which he addressed. I was one of those selected to address the people at Tammany Hall and in the wards. The general election was carried on with great energy by both parties.

Our organization was completed by dividing the city into small districts with a committee appointed to each, whose duty it was to canvass its district and ascertain the political opinion of each voter by going from house to house, seeing and conversing with as many as possible, and enquiring the politics of such as we could not see. The district committees reported their strength at the ward meetings, the names were called off with marginal notes stating whether good, bad, or doubtful, so that at the general meeting, we could determine very nearly what would be the result in the city; and the result of the election destroyed the hydra monster, Federalism.

After about sixty ballots taken in the House of Representatives, Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr had an equal vote. At that time, it was not customary to designate which should be President, and which Vice-President. The candidate having the greatest number of votes was chosen President, and the one having the next to the greatest vote, Vice-President. I think it was on the sixty-first ballot that Cæsar Rodney, a Representative from Delaware, left his seat, and this gave Thomas Jefferson a majority of one vote. Thus, Aaron Burr was elected Vice-President.

At about this time, I joined Captain John Swarthout's artillery company, in which I served for six years. I was then appointed Lieutenant of Infantry in Captain James Cheatham's Company, and was, at the next meeting of the Council, promoted to the rank of Captain in Colonel Van Buren's regiment. I became senior Captain of the regiment, and had command of a battalion; but before the commissions were made out for the promotions, (Major in my case) I left the regiment. At the particular request of D. D. Tompkins, then Governor, I became a student of Military Tactics, etc., under Colonel de la Croix, and remained under his instruction for about two years, until I was appointed Captain in the United States Infantry. I was then a member of a club of forty gentlemen including Governor Tompkins, Lieut.-Gov. Broome, Major James Fairley, Dewitt Clinton, Sylvanus Miller, Pierre C.

Van Wyck, Henry Remsen, James Cheatham, Daniel Smith, Henry Rutgers, and others.

In 1812, the storm of the war was gathering and I decided to ask for a commission as I was prepared by study for the military profession. I applied for a commission in the army, referring to the Vice-President and several Congressmen from this State; and, in a few days, I received a Captain's Commission, and was assigned to the 13th Regiment of U. S. Infantry, commanded by Colonel Peter P. Schuyler. I now entered the army with rank far beneath what I might have had, as my friend, Governor Tompkins, told me, if I had asked the assistance of my friends. I said that I thought my rank as high as it should be on entering, and that I should prefer to gain my promotion by service. He told me that I would find very many above me who would be more fit to obey than to command; and so I found it, for great ignorance of military tactics prevailed in the new army, and the old one was not far beyond us in field duty. However, things soon took a better aspect, for we had some educated and scientific officers, and all soon improved who were capable of improvement.

I approach, with diffidence, a sketch of my military career, as I cannot extend it so as to give a general account of the war; but must confine myself to the movements in which I myself took part.

At an interview with Colonel Schuyler, he said, "The State of New York comprises five recruiting districts, four of these will be commanded by the field officers of the regiment, and I appoint you to the command of the fifth." He then asked me if I knew of any young officer of talent who would make a good Adjutant. I was pleased with the opportunity to recommend my young friend, Joseph C. Eldrige, who had been appointed an ensign, and was very desirous of being attached to my company.

I knew that a regimental appointment would, in a measure, separate us on duty; but it would place him in a more prominent position, and, perhaps, promote his interests. Eldrige was appointed. This occurred on Tuesday, and the Colonel said that my instructions would be ready on Thursday, when he wished me to proceed to Charlotte, on Lake Champlain, open my orders, and proceed as directed therein. On Thursday I buckled on my sword to advance to my station to begin duty as one of the defenders of my country.

I went up the river accompanied by Lieutenants Vale and Curtis attached to my command, and several other officers going to different stations. We arrived at Troy, and took the stage to go north; but at Skenesborough we were obliged to exchange into open wagons on account of the bad state of roads.

We went on at about the rate of one mile per hour until we arrived at Charlotte on the east bank of Lake Champlain. I now opened my orders, and found my headquarters to be at Willsborough, five miles from the west bank of the Lake, which was still frozen over; but the ice was not strong enough to cross on. We stayed with Judge McNeal for two days. The Judge was an "old fashioned" looking old gentleman, and rather amusing. He said that though he had taken no part in the Revolution, some called him Toryish (as he expressed it); but they did not trouble him much. He said that he was not very "cute" at the law, but they made him a judge for want of a better person. On the second night that we were with him, the old judge knocked at my door, and said I must get up and go down to the Lake to see the ice break up. I did as he desired, hearing a noise like that of hundreds of mills grinding. When we reached the Lake shore we found all the ice in motion; it was still stuck, but jambing and breaking to pieces. The noise continued all night; but, in the morning, there was no ice to be seen. Though the wind was blowing down heavily from the mountains on the other side of the Lake, we had the ferrymen prepare their boat to try to pull us across. I was induced to take the helm, and by dint of luffing in the squalls, managed, at length, to get over safely. There was a Clergyman in the boat who had traveled with us from New York. He was much alarmed in crossing the Lake, and in the squalls he clung to my arms—which intertered with my steering. I several times requested him to desist, but he had no command over his muscles, and could not help it. Coming up from New York, he had entered into all our amusements; but he often called us "wicked fellows." On this occasion, I told him that he would be in bad company in case we should capsize while he was clinging to such a "wicked fellow." After crossing over we had much difficulty in finding horses. At length a fine looking young man said to me, "Sir, I am making a journey, but you may take my horse to Willsborough if you will send him back to me immediately; I will wait here until the horse is returned." I thanked him, and asked,

"Isn't your name McNeal?" He said, "It is." "I thought so," said I, "for I have thus far found the most obliging people in the neighborhood bearing that name." Leaving the other gentlemen to follow, I rode to Willsborough, a little village situated on a small river. It contained a post office, a mill, a forge, a distillery, a tavern, and ten or twelve small houses. I took quarters for myself and officers at "Jones' Hotel" which appeared quite comfortable compared with other things I saw. Vale and Curtis joined me in the course of a day, and it was soon known in the neighborhood that our party had arrived, and many people came to call upon us. Recruits came in even during the first week. I enlisted eight men, a drummer and a fifer. Other officers soon reported for duty, and I established thirteen recruiting stations in my district under Captains and Lieutenants who did not know much about their duty, having just entered the service.

One of the men introduced himself as Captain Trull, and said that he commanded a company. He was a little lame, and I told him that I thought he would find it difficult to make long marches. He replied, "I will show you how I can march," and, holding his cane before his right eye, he stepped off, "dot and carry one," in good style, as he supposed. I, of course, approved. He finally, after two days, went off to his station in good spirits leaving his liquor bill unpaid. It was brought to me, and I found that he had consumed no less than thirty gin slings. I shall have occasion to speak of Captain Trull hereafter; also, of Captain Blachley, from Long Island. The latter made a requisition on me for uniform and side-arms. I told him that the arms and ammunition had not, as yet, arrived; and there was no provision for clothing and arming officers, that they had to supply themselves. He said that it was very hard, and that he would be obliged to go home and sell his little farm to raise the necessary funds.

He said that it was better to do this than to resign, and requested fifteen days' leave, which I gave him. At the expiration of that time he returned armed and equipped; and, being assigned to a station, and receiving his instructions and supplies, he proceeded to duty.

On my arrival at Plattsburgh, I was ordered to take charge of the arsenal and all the batteaux built on the lake. About forty were delivered to me and secured in the small harbor at the mouth of the Saranac River.

Lieutenant Curtis was there, under my orders, recruiting. I found Plattsburgh a pleasant station compared with Willsborough. The citizens were much pleased at my coming to take command, and complained that Curtis had annoyed them by marching his recruits about the streets with music at unseasonable hours of the night. This was immediately discontinued on my arrival. I received clothing and supplies from Colonel Clark, at Burlington. I had both infantry and artillery recruits, and arms and ammunition for each; tents were erected for the infantry; I took barracks for the artillery, and began building both. Curtis had enlisted a man who was an excellent drummer, but a very hard drinker, and I found it difficult to keep him sober even at drills and parades. I tried many ways, but to no effect. One day I directed my first sergeant, George Helmbold, to have one hundred stones as large as a fist collected and placed three feet apart, and a basket three feet from the first stone. I then ordered him to select a man for me to pick them up one by one and place them in the basket, all within forty-five minutes. He considered a moment then (as he had been directed) recommended Jordan, the drummer. It was after morning drill; I ordered Jordan to be called and asked him if he could do this. He said, "Yes Sir; in half the time." He began, and got on well for a time, but not quick enough to do it in the specified time. I said, "If you are behindhand, it must be done again." He now kicked off his shoes. When he finally accomplished his task he threw himself on the ground quite exhausted. I then asked him if he knew why I had ordered it done. He said "no" and I told him that it was for drinking too much. He said that it would cure him, for he had rather be shot than do it again. He had walked nearly six miles, and had stooped to pick up and deposit the stones in the basket two hundred times. It did cure him; at least, he became quite a sober man; and Lieutenant Ward found this to be an excellent mode of punishment. I never knew a man to do it more than once. When the army assembled, it was generally adopted as a very severe punishment. I remained at this station from June to September, and sent three hundred and thirty well drilled men to Greenbush. Many singular incidents occurred in recruiting. I used to have the men practice firing at the top rail of a fence. On one occasion I noticed that one of them went through all the motions of loading, etc., but that he did not fire. I called him to the front and ordered him to give [illegible] Up

doing so, he was wheeled about, his shoulder badly bruised, and his musket flew out of his hands. He was never after afraid to fire one charge after having fired three all at the same time. The defence of the port and public property being left to me, I organized guards, patrols, counter-signs, etc. Colonel Thorn soon arrived with a regiment of militia.

I furnished the Militia Commandant with the parole and counter-sign, and all went well until the arrival of a large detachment of militia, of which Gen. Mooers took command, but continued to quarter at his house on Cumberland Head, three miles distant. I was, one night, called by the officer of the guard, and, on going to the guard house, found it full of prisoners among whom were Gen. Mooers' aids de camp. I released them and passed them beyond my sentinels. On the next day I was served with an order from the General to strike my tents and remove my men half a mile off, and to desist from giving out parole and counter-sign. I addressed the General in writing and told him that I was placed there on special duty, being ordered by the War Department to take charge of the public buildings, etc., that I should obey his orders under protest, and I requested him to appoint some officer to take charge of the public property and to attend to my other duties, recruiting, etc., as I declined to do further duty except under special order from the Department.

I, however, removed my men to the place assigned. But, in the afternoon, the General called upon me, and wished to come to an understanding. I told him that I presumed that he acted under the article which says, "if the officers of the regular army and the militia meet on the march or in quarters, or on duty,—the one holding the highest commission shall command the whole." He said, "Yes; that he did."

I told him that this rule did not apply in our case, as I was on special duty, and that he was ordered to defend the frontier; that he had nothing to do with my command, and that I had no right to abandon my duty or post. I told him that I deemed a guard etc., necessary to secure the public property, and that he had no guard established. If he would remove his head-quarters to the town and establish a well regulated guard, it would answer the purpose; or if he would authorize an officer in the village to receive the parole and counter-sign, I would furnish them every day. The General acknowledged that he was wrong, and wished me to resume my old station, and proceed with my duties as before. I

told him that I could not do it informally, as I had obeyed his order, and answered it in writing, and both order and answer were recorded in my orderly book, and it required a written revocation of the order to be likewise recorded. This he sent me and thus the matter ended.

In a few days Adjutant-General Bain, of the British army, arrived with a flag of truce. He wished to see General Dearborn who, he supposed, was at Burlington. He took lodgings at the hotel at which I lodged, and the next morning the militia drummers beat the roll under our windows. Bain saw many of the men, and observed to me that we had some fine troops. I asked him if he had seen my men. He said, that he had seen them at reveille. I told him that they were militia, and that I should drill a small squad of my men at ten o'clock, when he might see them. He did so, and was much pleased. General Mooers informed me that General Bain wished to go to Burlington, and, if General Dearborn was not there to proceed to Albany. I gave it as my opinion that General Bain had more than one object in view—one, to see General Dearborn, and the other to take a small tour through our country to see what were our preparations for war. I suggested that he should not be allowed to go about the country alone, but that an intelligent officer should be sent with him; and that he should not be allowed to stroll about, but should keep on the direct stage route. He approved of my views, and sent Major Rathbone, of his command. On the 1st of October the recruiting districts were broken up and the army assembled at Greenbush. I was ordered to repair to Greenbush to report to the Adjutant-General with all the men who were with me, who had been enlisted by infantry officers. A few days before, I had sent off a detachment, and I had but two men remaining who were intended for the infantry. But, with these, I proceeded to Albany.

On the next morning I reported. I had expected to get a company out of the large number of men whom I had enlisted, but I found that they were all scattered through the army as non-commissioned officers at the request of the different Colonels, and I was a Captain without a company. A day or two after, I dined with General Dearborn. He regretted that there was no company of my own drilling for me, but said that Colonel Schuyler would do the best he could for me. When I saw the Colonel, he said that I had best recruit a company for myself, selecting my part of the

State as I pleased. I declined on the ground that the army was about to march to the frontier, and that I did not wish to be recruiting while my regiment was in the field. I, therefore, offered my resignation, but it was declined, and I finally agreed to pass on, and station officers through the western district to recruit and forward the men to the regiment with which I was to proceed. I had become acquainted with Lieut. Col. Winfield Scott at Albany. He admired the appearance of my *two* men. He marched a battalion of artillery to the frontier, and we often encamped together during our long march. He often, there-after attended my drills and complimented me highly as a drill officer. We arrived at the Flint Hill Encampment together, and joined General Smith's command on the same day. On my arrival at Flint Hill Encampment, three miles east of Buffalo, I was informed that two British brigs, loaded with stores had come down Lake Erie, and were at anchor under the guns of Fort Erie, and that Lieutenant Elliott of the Navy had determined to board them and cut them out. As I had no company, as yet, I rode down to Buffalo, and volunteered to join the expedition. Mr. Elliott regretted that the command of officers was made up. I passed the evening with the party, and accompanied them to the shore, where they embarked in three boats. They rowed up the Lake for some distance, then, dropping down with the current, they boarded the brigs. One was lightly armed and made some resistance, but was soon overpowered, the cables cut, and got under weigh for the American shore. One was brought in and anchored under a battery manned by some three hundred militia under command of Major Miller, as I afterward learned. The other brig drifted down and grounded on the west side of Squaw Island, within six hundred yards of the British shore. As soon as the American brigs, Adams and Caledonia, got under weigh, my servant, William Williams, and I rode down the beach to see them beat in. The road turned up the hill to the battery and I discovered that the battery on the opposite side had opened its fire upon the Adams. I inquired in vain for the commanding officer of the militia battery. I asked the men for ammunition and found all excepting port-fires. The men were stooping under the parapet at every flash, and none would assist me to return the fire. I then sent Williams out on the road to invite in any stray soldiers or sailors whom he could meet; he soon returned with three or four. We made a fire of rails on the parade, the men loaded and I

I sighted the pieces, and a man with a burning rail touched them off, as I directed. We were soon out of ammunition; there was firing below us on the bank, and I sent my man Williams to endeavor to get some nine pounder ammunition. He found Colonel Scott in command, who, knowing my man, sent me a good supply. So we kept up the fire until the prizes were secured and the cargo landed, when the British batteries ceased firing. When the prisoners were landed, I took charge of them, procuring a few of the militia to act as guard, and proceeded with them to Buffalo. I was much fatigued, and several times during the march I found myself sleeping on my horse. I delivered my prisoners to General Hall, and proceeded to my regiment which was then on the march from camp to go to the protection of the brigs, particularly the Caledonia which was aground on the island. A strong detachment was placed on Squaw Island, which repelled and severely cut up two or three parties that attempted to board the brig. Before evening, the 56th and 13th Regiments of Infantry, Scott's battalion of artillery and Colonel Stanton's and Colonel Mead's regiments of militia were assembled at the mouth of the Conjacaty Creek expecting a visit from the British. Colonel Schuyler was in command. In the evening, Scott's servants having foraged and found some beef steaks, he invited Col. Schuyler and several other officers, among them, myself, to partake and, while eating, the militia guards reported that the river was full of boats crossing above and below.

The Colonel ordered me to take a few men and get a good position above, and report frequently what I saw. I sent frequent messages that nothing was stirring in that quarter, but at about two o'clock, I heard troops moving on the road. I challenged them, and was answered by one of our officers "We are on the retreat, get your horse and join us." I had left my horse at General Porter's and, proceeding there, I found all quiet. Elliott was also there. We stood on the piazza and saw the troops passing. I challenged, and was answered by Captain Sprowell, of the 13th, 2d Company; he and Martin joined us. None of us believed the enemy to be near, and if it was, it was our duty to fight and not retreat. Colonel Schuyler was very censurable. Our two companies halted at the battery at which I had been in the morning, and determined to stand and meet any enemy that might advance; but my command was soon put to an end by the arrival of Major

Huyck of our regiment. He requested me to mount his horse (mine having strayed) and ride to Buffalo to alarm General Hall's command. When I arrived there all was quiet. I aroused General Hall, who was much bewildered, and did not know what to do. At my suggestion he called a trumpeter who, after blowing for some time, got together some thirty horsemen without arms, having lent theirs to the boarding party. Thus ended this disgraceful affair, as a beginning to the war. To the honor of Lieut. Col. Scott, I may say that he did not obey the order to retreat, but remained on the ground all night.

On the next day we all assembled again at Flint Hill Encampment. Colonel Schuyler sent for me to advise him as to his best course, whether he should arrest or challenge an officer who had said that he acted in a cowardly manner by ordering the retreat. I advised him to do neither, but to let it pass. He remained but a short time with the regiment: he was an excellent disciplinarian and drill officer. He was soon Adjutant-General of the command of his brother-in-law, Colonel Cushing. We passed the winter of 1812–1813 camping at Flint Hills, and marching to Buffalo and Black Rock and back. The troops suffered very much for want of provisions and clothing suitable to the climate. We built comfortable log barracks, but we lost by death through the winter some three hundred men. My company, and that of Captain Morgan marched to and from Buffalo twenty times during the winter. Old Colonel Porter, known as "Blow hard," commanded. He frequently dreamed that there was an attack on Buffalo, and we were ordered to march from comfortable cantonments at Williamsville, eleven miles from Buffalo. And when there after a march, the tracks of which could be traced by the blood from the feet of the men (for they were nearly all bare footed) we were compelled to encamp in the streets being unable to procure quarters.

Early in April, the whole army was marched to the river to perform drill in order, first, to keep the militia from rebellion, and second, to storm the batteries on the British side of Niagara. Both of which were effected. A brigade of Pennsylvania Militia was mutinous, and even threatened to take General Smith, our Commander, out of camp. We formed line of battle, on one occasion, expecting an attack from them. We soon left Camp Rock, and returned to the cantonment at Williamsville. We remained there

for a few days, then the whole force marched to Black Rock across the Niagara River and stormed the batteries on the British side. I was ordered to General Smith's quarters where I found a number of officers assembled.

The General stated that we were to cross in three divisions; at twelve o'clock, and storm the batteries on the margin of the river. He asked me how many men I reported for duty. I answered, eighty.

He said he would give me seventy more and an additional subaltern, and I was to have three boats. The General remarked, "Virginia will not complain tonight." Most of the officers present were Virginians, and he thought me to be one also by my name. We were dismissed and we found our respective commands; but the boats were full of ice and water, and deficient in oars. It was near daylight before we moved. We stormed the batteries with a small loss, and took a number of prisoners; but the enemy having received a large reenforcement from Fort Erie, we were compelled to recross the river leaving a small detachment behind, which was captured.

Among those taken was my first sergeant, George Helmbold, who had separated from my command in the bustle of retreat. He had a presentiment that he should be killed in the first engagement, and he told me afterwards, that finding, after a few shots had been exchanged, that he still lived, he gave up his superstition, and was ever after a brave man. After our return, General Winder was ordered to cross with his brigade, but the fire was so brisk that he could not effect a landing. The prisoners taken from us were marched to Fort George, and examined by Colonel Myers of the British Army. Helmbold had held prisoner, during the night, a British sergeant, and imprudently, as well as unmilitarily, had taken his sword and belt. The sergeant was missing, and it was reported that Helmbold had killed him, while a prisoner, and taken his sword and belts. The Colonel asked him his regiment, and the name of his Captain. Helmbold said that he belonged to the 13th Regiment, and Captain Myers' Company. The Colonel enquired particularly about the size, complexion, and appearance of his commander, and then said, "I know your Captain; he is a British deserter, and I should like to see him." The sergeant replied, "Perhaps, sir, you may meet him by and by;" and so he did, for at the taking of Newark and Fort George, Colonel Myers

was wounded and taken prisoner. A few days after the battle, in company with some of the officers, I visited the British prisoners. The moment my name was mentioned, Colonel Myers related the above, and said, "I expressed a wish to see you, but not under the present circumstances; I am mistaken, you are not the deserter." Then, he said, "Your sergeant is a brave fellow; he would have been condemned to be shot, had it not been for the wife of the missing British sergeant who, hearing the charges against Helmbold, came down to Fort George to say that her husband was wounded and taken to a hut, where he then was, but that he had not been ill used by Sergeant Helmbold further than having been deprived of his side-arms and belt. This saved Helmbold's life.

The expedition thus ended, we marched to our cantonments at Williamsville.

Our next attempt was to cross and take Fort Erie. We started one morning just after daylight and rode up the river from Conjacaty Creek to Black Rock.

An officer was sent over with a flag to demand the surrender of the fort. If it was refused, he was to make a signal to that effect on leaving the shore. This, he omitted to do, and, much to the dissatisfaction of all, we were ordered to return and secure the boats. The plan of the first Campaign of 1812 was as follows:— The army was formed with the right on Lake Champlain, under General Pike; the center, on the Niagara, under General Smith; the left at Detroit under General Hull, and the whole under General Dearborn. The left wing, under Hull, was defeated by the command of Gen. Proctor. This occurred through cowardice or treason; from the mode of attacking the British fort, the latter was strongly suspected. No general expecting resistance would attack a fort in column, when he could do so in line; for a ball striking the head of a column would completely rake it, which would not be the case in line.

I conversed with Col. Miller, Col. Snelling, and Col. Watson; they were all satisfied that the affair was arranged between Hull and Proctor. From the loss of the left wing, the center became the most important division. This was to push forward and drive down the British forces from the protection of Kingston and Montreal; and the right wing was to join them at St. Regis on the St. Lawrence; and the whole body was then to move on Montreal. At the same time three squadrons of armed vessels were organized

and equipped;—one on Lake Champlain under command of Commodore McDonough; one on Lake Ontario under Commodore Jones, and one on Lake Erie under the command of Commodore Perry, and all under the command of Commodore Chauncey. They were to co-operate with the armies. The left wing having been disposed of by General Proctor, he remained unopposed until forces took the field under Gen. Shelby and Gen. Harrison. They were successful against Proctor; Tecumseh, the Indian Chief, was killed by Col. R. M. Johnson, and the whole British and Indian forces were beaten. Commodore Perry was also successful on Lake Erie, taking the whole British Squadron; McDonough was, in like manner, successful on Lake Champlain; while Chauncey was effectually co-operating with the army of the center, on Lake Ontario, and holding in check the British Squadron. Early in April Gen. Dearborn and Commodore Chauncey arranged for the invasion of Canada. The whole land force, excepting a detachment then at Sackett's Harbor, assembled at and near Fort Niagara, embarked in Chauncey's Squadron and made a successful attack on Little York. We there lost our brave General Pike. I must now digress a little to give an account of the battle of Queenstown, which I omitted to bring in its proper place. The second battalion, as I have before stated, had taken some boats up Lake Ontario to Fort Niagara; while the first battalion marched on and encamped at Flint Hills, three miles from Buffalo.

Our troops at Fort Niagara, and small detachments from regiments, with Col. Mead and Col. Stanahan, under Gen. Wordsworth prepared under Col. Philip Van Rensselaer to attack Queenstown. Gen. Stephen Van Rensselaer, one of the best men of the age, though not the greatest general, was ordered to the Niagara frontier in command of the militia. His nephew, Col. Philip Van Rensselaer, a brave officer of some experience accompanied the General, who now determined to collect his forces and select a night in which to make a descent. General Smith's brigade, then at Flint Hills, and the troops at Fort Niagara were ordered to assemble at Lewiston, in accordance with orders from General Van Rensselaer, who ranked all the other officers on the frontier at that time. We took the line of march and proceeded towards the rendezvous; but when we were within seven miles of our destination the order was countermanded and we returned to camp that night after a march of twenty-eight miles over the worst possible roads.

That day I lost, through sheer fatigue, a fine, active young man; he was a sergeant named Comstock. We left him at a house on the road; but coming into camp, as we had promised, he was sent for, but found——dead. Two days after this we received another order to proceed to Lewiston, and on the way an express met us with orders for us to hurry on as the troops taken from Fort Niagara, including the second battalion of the 13th Infantry under Lieut.-Col. Christie, and a body of militia under Col. Mead and Col. Stanahan, commanded by Gen. Wordsworth, had crossed over to Queenstown in the night, and, after a sharp struggle, had taken possession of the town and heights. We moved on with great rapidity, but before we reached Queenstown our troops were overpowered, the British having received reinforcements from Fort Erie and Fort George, while many of our militia at Lewiston refused to go over.

The fight was an irregular one; most of our officers and many of our men were killed or wounded in crossing the river or soon after landing. Among the wounded were Col. Solomon Van Rensselaer, Lieut.-Col. W. Scott, Lieut.-Col. Christie, Captains Lawrence, Malcom, Wool, Armstrong, of the 13th Infantry, and several others of the 13th were killed. This severe loss among the officers arose from the fact that all those who could raise a few men took them over in separate commands. Captain Wool and Captain Ogilvie of the 13th Infantry both claimed great honor for having ascended the heights and taken an eighteen pounder that was mounted on a pivot. The piece was taken, but it has always been uncertain which of the officers took it. We arrived at Lewiston a few hours after the surrender; many of our wounded men had got to the boats and returned. The prisoners were marched to Fort George and thence sent to Montreal. The whole affair ended disastrously from mismanagement; for had Smith's brigade of about fifteen hundred men been ordered up in time to join the expedition not only Queenstown, but Fort Erie and Fort George would have been taken, and we should, undoubtedly, have been in possession of the British shore from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario; the British could not have withstood our united forces. Immediately on our arrival at Lewiston, General Van Rensselaer gave over the command to General Smith. I was ordered to enroll the remainder of the 2nd battalion of the 13th Infantry, to collect them, provide for their wants, and command them as a detachment. I found them

in a most wretched condition, in barns, under sheds and hay-stacks. I drew tents, and collected the men, provided medical assistance for those who were severely wounded, and from the remains of those four companies, I formed my grenadier company of the 13th Regiment, and for appearance, bravery, and knowledge of their duty they were not excelled in our army or in that of the enemy. We remained at Lewiston for ten or twelve days, and then marched back to our old quarters at Flint Hills where the wounded could be better cared for. We remained here until ordered to build barracks at Williamsville, on the "Eleven Mile" Creek. The cantonments were built by the troops, who marched and encamped there. The various parts of the work were systematically given to different parties, each under command of a captain. The duty of myself and party was to procure and haul sawed lumber.

The barracks were, at length, completed, and were very comfortable. During the winter (1812-13), we were on the defensive, and, with the exception of many alarms, and the frequent marching of my company (1st or Grenadier of the 13th) and that of Captain Morgan of the 12th to Buffalo and back, little or nothing worthy of note occurred. Marching to Buffalo so frequently was very severe duty. I occupied my quarters only one night after their completion; the remainder of the time I quartered in a tent either at Buffalo, or at the Cantonment. I often encamped in the street in Buffalo, there being no quarters to be had. Finally I secured the Ball-room for my men and a shoemaker's shop by way of quarters for myself. Here, during the winter, many occurrences took place which were very amusing at the time, but they would not be interesting to read at this late period. As I before stated, the campaign of 1813 began with the affair of Little York.

The troops remained there only two days. They took one or two schooners with stores, etc., burned a vessel on the stocks, and re-embarked and stood over for Fort Niagara.

Here the dead were buried and the wounded taken care of as well as circumstances would admit. Our squadron left Sackett's Harbor. General Smith's brigade, then at Williamsville encampment, was ordered to march to Fort Niagara. We descended the river in bateaux as far as the old French fort, one mile from Niagara Falls and just opposite to Chippeway. I was detached with two hundred men to take the boats back about two miles. We

accomplished this with great difficulty, the current being so strong that we could barely stem it. After effecting our object, we set out on our return to Chippeway. The men shouldered their oars for convenience in carrying them. When we approached the garrison, the troops, seeing a body of men carrying arms fourteen feet long, feared an attack and beat to arms; but our long weapons were harmless. At reveille we proceeded on our march to Lewiston where we halted. There an order reached us directing General Smith to re-enforce Fort Niagara with our regiment of infantry: for an attack was expected from the enemy's troops at Fort George by way of retaliation for the affair of Little Rock. We were just pitching our tents to shelter our men from a snow storm, when the order came. Colonel Christie, who was in command of our regiment, asked me if the regiment could move on immediately. Some of the other captains were consulted, and we finally started on the march without baggage.

The night was very dark, cold and stormy, and the roads were as bad as can be imagined. We commenced the march, left in front; so my company brought up the rear, a very unpleasant post, as those in the rear cannot go on until all stragglers have passed, when it is sometimes very difficult to catch up with the front. On arriving at the salt battery, Lieut. Col. Schuyler informed me that the field officers would go immediately to the fort, that I must halt and get shelter for the men, and, if it was necessary for us to come on, a rocket would be fired, in which case we must move down as quickly as possible. He gave me the parole and countersign. Our men took shelter such as they could find.

Captain Archer, of the light artillery, who was stationed in the battery, invited the officers to his quarters and ordered refreshments; but in less than half an hour the signal rocket was seen at the fort. I immediately formed as many men as I could collect, and left Captain Martin in command to follow as soon as possible, and to leave the same order to Sprowl and the other captains. We groped along through Egyptian darkness, the rain fell in torrents, and the mud was ankle deep. When I arrived at the chain of sentinels I was obliged to advance slowly through the mud, slipping down now and then among the stumps and stones.

I answered the challenge, "a detachment of the 13th Infantry;" the answer was the discharge of a musket, and the fire was repeated all along the line of sentinels.

After some difficulty in exchanging countersign, etc., we gained admittance to the fort and found the garrison under arms, as they had thought, at first, that we were the enemy. Everything went on quietly for the remainder of the night, and at daylight the rear of our regiment arrived. We had no quarters, but tents were furnished and we encamped on the parade. The next night the wounded from Little York were landed, and the fort was then like a hospital. The mess house and the stairs leading to the mess room were all filled. We remained on duty in the fort for several days, and then the whole force, excepting the regular garrison, encamped on Snake Island. It was literally *Snake* Island, for it was full of snakes. The men frequently shook rattle snakes from their blankets in the morning, and at every drill or parade snakes were killed on the ground.

The inhabitants of the island said that the snakes came down from the mountains in the spring to get water at the lakes; but that before they reached the water they were harmless. None of the men were bitten by them, at all events. While at this encampment I was engaged as second in an affair of honor between Dr. James Bronaugh and Major Stonard. Major Z. Taylor (late President of the U. S.) was associated with me as friends to Major Stonard. Captain Randolph and another gentleman were friends to the Doctor. The Major was shot in the thigh. He died of the wound in May, 1813. (See Appendix.)

While at Snake Hill every preparation was made for taking Fort George. It was arranged that on the night before the landing, Fort Niagara, the salt battery, and a battery which I built one night assisted by Lieutenant Totten as engineer (now General Totten, U. S. A.) should open fire of hot shot on Fort George and the batteries on that side, and at four o'clock, A. M., all the troops were to embark and wheel out by regiments. Lieut.-Col. Winfield Scott commanded the left with his light artillery supported by infantry.

Next, on the right, was the 13th Regiment, commanded by Lieut.-Col. Christie; and the other regiments according to rank. Each regiment formed a line of boats and moved in silence at wheeling distance.

The companies were so arranged in each boat as to form line immediately on landing. It was a misty morning, and our fleet had taken up its position under cover of the fog to effect our landing. The cannonading on the right was very brisk and effectual; all the

wooden buildings in Fort George were soon in flames, and the garrison marched out and formed on the plain ready to move in any direction. We had about five miles to row to the place of landing; as we neared the fleet the fog lifted, and a view was presented of our fleet at its moorings, and our full force approaching with flags displayed and our bands playing "Yankee Doodle." The garrisons of Forts George, Erie, and Chippeway, which had joined in the night, were in line near the bank. The firing now opened from the shore and shipping.

Lieutenant Trent, in the schooner "Julia," with one twenty-four pounder on a pivot, took a station opposite to a battery, furled his sails and moored his schooner for a "regular set to." Scott effected a landing, but did not succeed in advancing until re-enforced. I commanded the in-shore boats of our regiment, and was rowing for my position when General Boyd, who was on shore, called out, "Wheel in my jolly snorters," (the sobriquet by which our regiment was known). I immediately wheeled my boat when an order was passed from boat to boat "to keep on." I answered in the same way "Superior orders from shore." I landed and the remainder of the regiment followed, and Scott with all who were with him mounted the bank together. The contest was sharp, and soon ended. The British retreated, and were soon on a rapid march for "Twelve Mile" Creek. We advanced to Newark, but were annoyed by a fire of hot shot from a thirty-two pounder on a pivot in barbette in a block house. Colonel Christie was ordered to detach a force from his right and take it. I was ordered to take two companies from the right, and Lieutenant McDonough was to accompany me. Lieutenant Paige commanded my second platoon or company.

When I approached the block house, I detached him to the rear to take prisoners if they attemped to jump over the parapet; for it was a battery on the water side, and a block house on the land. I entered through a sally-port five feet high and three feet wide. The garrison jumped over the parapet and ran. Paige had not gained his position, and I never saw Mr. McDonough or his twelve pounder. After taking this position, the army found nothing to obstruct its progress. There were a few reports to the effect that large quantities of ammunition had been placed in the public stores with trains of powder leading to them, but examinations proved them to be untrue. The whole body advanced as far as the public

stores near the house of Mr. Black. Here the main body halted, and Lieut.-Col. Scott proceeded with his detachment to the ruins of Fort George. He found no troops to oppose him; all were on the march to the "Twelve Mile" Creek. The fired buildings were still burning. I was detached for main guard. The park of artillery was in the center, and the other troops were at the right and left facing south—the right near the road leading to the batteries. I was posted as main guard at about five hundred yards south of our line, and exactly in front of the park of artillery. I had occasion to go to Mrs. Black to instruct the family how far they could move without interruption. I took a glass of porter and some crackers and cheese with Mr. Black.

At about eight o'clock, Col. H. V. Milton, as officer of the day, visited me and requested me to have fires made up. I complied, though to have fires on out post in the enemy's country was contrary to what I had been taught. He said that in case of an alarm I might withdraw my guards and place them between the fires and the line. At about eleven o'clock the sentinel on night guard fired. I sent a non-commissioned officer and a file of men to enquire the cause. It was reported to be a false alarm. I had retired as directed. The officer of the day then rode up and said that I had been in great danger. The artillery, supposing my guard to be the enemy had aprons off guns, the guns primed, and port-fire ready; and had he been five seconds later my guard would have been cut down by grape shot from the whole park. Thus, by the providence of God we were saved. There was no alarm during the remainder of the night.

There was no necessity for stopping at Newark except the Generals having been hungry, and Mrs. Black having had a good dinner. I suppose they thought they had glory enough for one day without following up the enemy. The same night a division under Colonel Burns went down, crossed at "Five Mile" Meadows and took Fort Erie without resistance, and the next day marched down, took Chippeway, and joined us. The center was now concentrated at Fort George, having possession of everything from Fort Erie, on Lake Erie, to Fort George, on Lake Ontario. Our camp was for many days full of Canadians, who came in for protection. After giving the enemy time to reach Burlington Heights, at the head of the lake, a strong detachment of our army under General Lewis marched in pursuit. They halted on the first night at "Twelve Mile" Creek.

Our detachment under General Lewis marched from Fort George without baggage on the first day of June, 1813. It consisted of the 12th, 13th, and 14th Regiments of Infantry, Colonel Burns' regiment of Dragoons, and a strong detachment of Artillery, numbering in all, rank and file, about three thousand men. Our object was to attack the British in their entrenchments at Burlington Heights.

On the 2nd we halted to give the men a little rest at Crooks, twenty-two miles from the British lines. We had had a hard march of two days over bad roads obstructed by broken bridges and fallen trees placed in our way by the retreating enemy. Many of the officers took breakfast with Mr. Cook, a wealthy gentleman; and while I was enjoying the luxury of putting on a clean shirt, kindly lent me by Dr. J. Bronaugh with the injunction not to tell where I procured it, a party of Indians took possession of a high and almost perpendicular ridge of rocks in front of the house and commenced a heavy fire on the dragoon horses that were picketed in the door yard. Lieut. Joseph C. Eldridge, of my company, and adjutant of the regiment with the camp guard accomplished immediately, but with great difficulty, what seemed to be impracticable—he scaled the face of the rocks. At the same time, I was ordered to march to the rear of their retreat; but before I reached the top of the ridge they were all dispersed by Eldridge and had escaped.

We continued our march through mud and mire, it sometimes required six teams to drag our baggage wagons and artillery; the day was extremely warm, and we were obliged to repair several bridges before we could cross the streams. We halted in the evening at "Forty Mile" Creek. A detachment of boats with provisions and ammunition had followed our march. They were discovered by Commodore——— and we dispatched the schooners to destroy them.

As soon as we halted, Captain Archie of the artillery was ordered to the lake shore, supported by the 13th. Furnaces were erected and hot shot was soon prepared and used to such effect as to drive off the enemy. The remainder of our forces were bivouacked on either side of the road leading to the position of the enemy. Lieut. Van V——— commanded an advanced picket guard half a mile in advance on the road. This was the evening of the 3rd of June, and the 4th being the birthday of King George III, the enemy felt in good spirits, no doubt, and determined to precipitate our attack.

They moved their full force towards us in silence, bayoneted the advance sentinel, found the officer of the guard asleep, took the guard and marched straight into camp before they were discovered. Great confusion, of course, ensued. General Winder and General Chandler were taken prisoners while giving orders to the enemy, believing them to be their own troops, in consequence of one of our regiments having changed its position in the night to get better encamping ground. As soon as the firing was heard, Col. Christie moved our regiment along the beach with the intention to get in the rear of the enemy, take possession of the bridge over "Forty Mile" Creek, and cut off the retreat. We had nearly reached our point when an express came with orders to halt, and for the field officers to attend a council of war. General Lewis had been called back to Fort George, Gen. Winder and Gen. Chandler were prisoners and Christie thought that he ranked all the other officers. But, on going to the council, he found, much to his chagrin and mortification, that Col. Burns ranked by date of commission.

The question now was, shall we pursue or fall back? Our regiment was counter-marched over the field of battle after having taken twenty or thirty prisoners. When we arrived at the ground we found it strewed with dead and wounded of both parties to the number of four or five hundred. The troops on both sides were scattered. We buried the dead and stacked and burned the arms and baggage for want of transportation. We brought off the wounded and prepared to follow our retiring forces. I was informed that the British General S——— was lying among the dead. I sent an officer in search of him; he found a blanket and one of the General's pistols, but, like Lord G——— in the play, the General had carried off his own corpse. At noon we started after our retiring troops, and joined them at the "Forty Mile" Creek. Col. Schuyler asked permission to follow the retreating enemy with our regiment, but the Council of War would not consent.

If it had done so we might have retaken our two generals, and, perhaps, many prisoners, for General Winder told me, when he returned on parole, that at twelve o'clock the enemy had not collected five hundred men; they were not three miles from us, and they expected an attack every moment. On the 5th we continued our march and on the 6th we arrived at Fort George, hav-

ing gained no laurels and having lost nearly three hundred. We were now on the defensive, and General de R—— soon after arrived and took command. We now fortified our camp with a ditch in front, Fort George on the right, a strong battery on the left, and the river in the rear. About one-third of the men were detailed for fatigue duty to diminish the size of Fort George, which was so large as to require a garrison of seven hundred men to defend it properly. The men for duty were drilled eight hours per day. Attacks on our picket guards were frequently made by parties of British and Indians. It occurred to me that a six pounder would be of great benefit to each of our picket guards. I tried its effect for the first time on picket number two, on the swamp road.

I had it loaded with grape, and at four o'clock in the morning an attack was made. I turned out the guard, masked the piece, and, when all was ready, opened by half wheel by sections and touched off the gun.

The Indians set up a shout like that of a thousand devils, and were off. This plan was generally adopted. Our sentinels were frequently shot on post. One day I placed my whole chain each under cover of a rock, tree, or other object so that they might see without being seen. This, also, was afterwards generally adopted.

The Indians often approached our line of sentinels in the night and waited for the grand rounds. When the sentinels challenged, the Indians, guided by the sound of the voice, fired, and sometimes hit a man. One day I drilled my guard to strike once on the cartridge box when they heard an approach instead of challenging, and I instructed the rounds, relief, and grand rounds when they heard a sentinel strike his cartridge box once to answer by striking twice and to advance. This plan was followed, and, no doubt, saved many lives.

We were in the habit of reconnoitreing with small detachments, and we had many little fights with the picket guards. The enemy did the same, and one morning an attack was made on our picket number three near Butler's farm. A detachment of forty from our regiment was ordered out. Adjutant Eldridge was forming it and he asked me how many men he should take from my company. I told him as many as he pleased, and he took twenty-nine men. He had promised me not to take such commands as it was not pleasing to the other subalterns to be deprived of them by the adjutant, whose duty it was

to act only with the regiment; and thus give others a chance to signalize themselves. I repeated this while they were forming; he said, "Only this once, Captain, and never again; may I take your pistols and belt?" I said "yes," and he marched. After a time, the firing was very heavy. I went to the Adjt.-General for permission to go out with the remainder of my company.

He answered, "An order has been given for your regiment to march." Though we marched rapidly, we were too late to prevent the horrible massacre of our brave young officer and his men.

On his arrival at the picket, he had found the guard engaged with a very superior force. He joined in the action; the enemy fell back, and he pursued into a morass surrounded by thick, bushy woods. There, he was surrounded by a large force of British and Indians and cut all to pieces.

Only three out of the forty taken from our regiment, and but few of the picket guard returned to camp. Our regiment passed the mangled dead in pursuit of the enemy, which had fled with the scalps. The bodies were stripped and horribly mutilated. Lieut. Joseph C. Eldridge, the Adjutant of the 13th Regiment, who was among the killed, was a young man of great promise, and much beloved by his fellow officers.

Being recalled from the pursuit, we had to perform the melancholy duty of burying our mangled officers and men in one common grave.

The first battalion of our regiment was ordered to Queenstown to accomplish two objects. First, to send a captain's command at reveille the next morning to reconnoitre in the neighborhood of Lundy's Lane and Niagara Falls, to see Mrs. Wilson at the Falls, and to obtain from her all the information possible respecting the strength of the enemy at, or near St. David's, the number of Indians employed and acting with the British, and such other information as she might possess. Also, to collect and forward by the river all the public property found at Queenstown. I had been unwell for a few days, and unfit for duty; but Major Huyck, who was in command, was so desirous of having me go with him, that I consented, and waived my privilege of being on the sick list. Sometimes I marched on foot, and at others the Major dismounted and lent me his horse.

We arrived in the night, and bivouacked in front of the Hamilton House, then an elegant establishment, on the bank of the river,

but now almost a ruin. The Major opened his orders and directed me to command the reconnoitreing detachment. I sent a non-commissioned officer and a file of men to impress a horse, and they had just returned with a fine one, and I was forming my detachment of one hundred and twenty infantry and sixteen riflemen, who accompanied us from the fort, to act as flankers, when Major Chapin arrived with forty mounted Canadian Volunteers.

I knew the Major to be a great humbug, and I told Major Huyck that I must relinquish the command, as I could not march under the orders of Major Chapin of the militia.

Chapin said he did not expect to take command, but would act under my orders. We then moved on about four miles. Then I detached the Major with his volunteers to take a back road and join me in Lundy's Lane, which he did. We proceeded to the Falls.

I had an interview with Mrs. Wilson, an American lady who married an Englishman. Their house was a great rendezvous for the British officers. She reported fourteen hundred regulars at and near St. David's, about seven miles distant, and a body of seven hundred Indians from Lake Superior. She said that Captain McGilvery, with a detachment of Indians and regulars, had been down that morning. He knew of our detachment being out, and would attack us on our return at a pass cut out between two hills, about four miles from Queenstown. She feared that his force and the position he had taken would render my return almost impossible. Having obtained all the information I could gather I marched for Queenstown and ———a fight.

I sent twenty men, infantry, as an advance guard, and four of Chapin's Volunteers as a vidette in front of the advanced guard, then my column of one hundred infantry, with eight riflemen as flankers on the right and left, and Major Chapin with thirty-six mounted volunteers to bring up the rear. During the march, Mrs. Wilson's report of the intended attack was confirmed by a young lady, the daughter of a British surgeon, whose house we had surrounded on account of information received that it was the residence of a British officer. He appeared in uniform and delivered his sword, saying that he was my prisoner; but his uniform satisfied me that he was not. I, however, asked him his rank, and he said, "I have the honor to be Hospital Surgeon in His Britannic Majesty's Service. I, of course, returned his sword, as he was a

non-combatant, and not a prisoner. The daughter was very pretty, and quite communicative.

She wished me to dismount and take refreshments, which I declined; she, however, brought me some strawberries and cream. She said she feared I would be killed or made prisoner; and she hoped, if I were made prisoner, that I would take a parole and return there; I had been polite to her father, and it would give them great pleasure to make me comfortable should I fall into the hands of their people. We proceeded, and just as the vidette had entered the descending grounds, the advance guard following, the enemy opened a heavy fire from both sides of the road. They should have reserved their fire until the main body entered the deep cut, when their advantage would have been very great; but, as yet, the main body was on higher ground than even themselves. I threw the column into the right and left, making a half wheel from the center of the platoons, and gave them a well directed and deadly fire to the right and left. They stood only three or four discharges, when the Indians on the right of the road gave way with a tremendous whoop and yell, and the British, on the left, broke, threw off their accouterments and ran through the woods. We passed the ravine and, procuring spades from a farm house near, we buried three of our men killed. Major Chapin, with his thirty-six Canadian Volunteers, now came up. He said that he had stopped at a house where, he was informed, some British officers and men were concealed. We returned to Queenstown.

Major Huyck met and embraced me in the street. He had heard heavy firing and feared that I had been cut off. He had sent all but eighty of his men to the fort with public stores. He had his party formed, and expected an attack every moment; in fact, when he saw us approach, he believed us to be the enemy, and was prepared to resist. We marched four miles together towards Fort George, and halted for the night. Some deserters came in and said that we had handled them very roughly, and killed many of their men.

The next day, I reported to General Dearborn the result of my reconnoissance. Upon being asked my opinion, I stated that a proper force to make an attack would be a thousand infantry, well supported by artillery and cavalry. Colonel Butler (?) having heard of my report, volunteered three days after to march his regiment over the same route. His offer was accepted, and he marched

with seven hundred infantry and a detachment of artillery. He was attacked, on a woody road, by a considerable force; he sent an express for re-enforcement, and our regiment immediately made a forced march to Queenstown. There, we received notice that Butler with his whole force were prisoners. Our regiment alone being too weak to follow the enemy, unsupported by artillery or cavalry, returned to the fort, and the boasting Colonel and his command remained prisoners. At this time Commodore Perry made a requisition for a company of infantry to act as marines. When I heard of it, I went immediately to headquarters to offer my services; but I was just a few minutes too late to be accepted, and thus lost the opportunity of being present at Perry's victory on Lake Erie, when he so signally defeated a superior force and gained so much glory. This, with Harrison's victory, destroyed the British power in the West, and the way was now clear for a descent upon Kingston and Montreal.

It was arranged that a strong militia force should be collected at Fort George to permanently secure the Niagara. The whole regular force in upper Canada was to consolidate at Sackett's Harbor under General Wilkinson. General Hampton's command, then at Chateauguay, "Four Corners," in Clinton County, New York, was to join us with four thousand men and provisions for the whole army at the mouth of Salmon River on the St. Lawrence.

Every arrangement was made by General Wilkinson at Fort George. The army embarked in some six hundred craft of different kind. Each division and regiment displayed a different flag. The commander of the boats had descriptive lists of each flag, so that they might know one another. The movement was made under convoy of the fleet commanded by Commodore Chauncey.

We left General McClear, of the State Militia, with his brigade. He remained but a short time when he disgraced our cause by burning the village of Newark. He did it under the plea that he could not defend it, and that, if left, it would afford winter quarters for the enemy. This act, so uncalled for, brought on a severe retaliation. Through either the cowardice or treason of Captain Leonard, the British took Fort Niagara without meeting the slightest resistance. They then, at different points, crossed the Niagara with strong detachments, and burned Youngstown, Lewiston, the Tuscarora Indian Village, Black Rock, and Buffalo; killing many, and destroying an immense amount of property. We proceeded

down the lake in continual gales, making ports for shelter as often as possible. Sometimes, we would land on the beach where no inlet was to be seen; a hundred men with spades would soon remove a bar of sand thrown up by the surf, and open a passage to a commodious bay.

We were much scattered during the descent; many of our boats were stranded; mine, with one hundred and thirty men and women, was among the number, but all were saved. Our pilot declared that our boat could not live in such a storm, and that he could make a safe port; but that, if I determined to keep on, the whole responsibility must rest on me.

I, therefore, directed him to bear away for a port. We saw lights on shore, boats having landed there and left their fires burning. When nearly in I told him that I heard the breakers, and asked him if he could haul off; he said it was impossible. We then kept off and ran on; the men were ordered to sling their knapsacks and stand ready to jump out on either side when the boat struck, and endeavor to shove her up. I stood on the bow with the painter, and, as she struck, we all jumped out; the breakers went over us several feet; the third time she struck, she went to pieces and sixty barrels of provisions floated off. We all gained the shore, a narrow sand beach and an abrupt rocky bank at least one hundred feet high. We found that we had landed at Mexico Bay. We collected some wet provisions along shore, and some sails which I ordered to be so disposed as to afford shelter for the men; then I started along the beach to explore.

About two miles away, I found Major Wilcox of the Canada Volunteers in the same situation as myself; two or three miles further, I found Captain Morton of our regiment snug in a fine little bay. I dined with him on some fine ducks that he had shot that morning. I arranged with him to have all my men who were able to march, join him as soon as the weather moderated, and march with his effective men to Sackett's Harbor; and to have him row down and take off my disabled men and women.

After a dangerous and fatiguing row of twenty days from Fort George, we arrived at Sackett's Harbor. In a few days we all assembled as an army and after a reorganization, we passed the Grenadier Island. According to the original plan of the campaign, we were to attack Kingston and destroy the British fleet if possible. But General Armstrong, Secretary of War, joined us and changed

the plan. He directed General Wilkinson to leave Kingston in our rear and drop down the St. Lawrence to take Montreal with the aid of General Hampton, then at Chateauguay with four thousand men, who were to join us at the mouth of the Salmon River on the St. Lawrence, with additional boats and provisions for the whole army.

It was, I think, a great military error to leave the enemy's fleet and a large land force in our rear; but the orders of the Secretary were to this effect, and they were obeyed. While preparing to descend the St. Lawrence two schooners, by general order, took on board Surgeon McNear and all the sick and disabled men, and sailed in a storm for Sackett's Harbor. The gale that night was tremendous, and the vessels were cast away on a reef or rocks, one mile from the main land. It was reported the next morning, and I volunteered (to General Boyd then commanding on the island) to go to their rescue. He said that it was impossible in such a storm, but that if I would undertake it I might have as many men and boats as I pleased.

I took three Durham boats and thirty of my own men, several of whom were old sailors. With great difficulty we reached the vessels and found them lying on the rocks with the sails blowing in every direction and the breakers making a full sweep over them. We boarded to leeward, but saw no one at first. I finally found the captain of the first vessel in an upper birth in the forecastle; I called and he answered, but refused to come up until I went down and beat him up with the flat of my sword. Dr. McNear was in the cabin in water up to his shoulders. We found everything afloat in the hold, including many dead men. They had got at the hospital stores, and were all drunk. We made thirteen trips to the shore and landed all, dead and alive, from both vessels, and unbent the sails and made a covering for them. In the afternoon, Dr. Ross came from the island and took charge of them while I returned to Grenadier Island and reported. A general order was issued stating the disaster and that, the storm having abated, the dead and living were landed by boats from the garrison. It was now about the 1st of November, the men being badly supplied, their sufferings were great. There was clothing at Sackett's Harbor, but the Quartermaster had been unable to procure any. Our Majors, Huyck and Malcom, differed in most things. I consulted with them, and recommended an application in the name of the

regiment to Colonel I. B. Preston to take command of ours, he being without a regiment in consequence of having declined the command of a new one. We procured the sanction of the General, who issued complimentary orders to the Colonel and to the Regiment—to the latter for having offered, and to the former for having accepted the command. The Colonel asked me to go to Sackett's Harbor to try to procure some clothing. Taking a requisition, I started, and after a long row on a stormy night, I arrived at Sackett's Harbor, saw General Wilkinson on board of the "Lady of the Lake," and, after an altercation, succeeded in getting an order for all the clothing in store and started back with it to the island.

The dispute and explanation made Wilkinson and myself particular friends. As I am writing an account of my own experience, rather than a history of the war, it is unnecessary for me to excuse myself for speaking so often of my own movements. Everything being arranged, the army left Grenadier Island about the 5th of November in the same order in which we left Fort George, under convoy of some of Commodore Chauncey's squadron which proceeded with us as far as Frenchman's Creek, and then returned to Sackett's Harbor.

We passed through the Thousand Islands. They are so close to one another as to require skillful pilots; these we had, and notwithstanding sunken rocks, false currents, etc., passed safely through.

As soon as our convoy had returned to Sackett's Harbor, a British squadron of gunboats left Kingston and followed us down the river. Colonel M——— marched from Kingston at the head of twenty-two hundred men, regulars and militia, and hung on our rear. We passed down the river to within ten miles of Ogdensburg, where we landed on the American shore to avoid passing Prescott in boats so full of men. The main body of our army marched by land, while a sufficient number of men and officers remained in the boats to take them down.

The senior Captains of the regiments were ordered to join Gen. Jacob Brown at two o'clock, P. M. We dropped down the river, noting the channel and the currents, until within round shot range of the guns of Prescott, when we returned to camp. Prescott was a fortification with a dry ditch and drawbridge with bombproof sufficient to cover five hundred men, as I ascertained by examination in 1820. It was a strong post, mounting twelve

thirty-two pounders in barbette, with an eight-gun water battery; it was worth taking. Our orders were to remain in camp until twelve o'clock, then, replenish our fires, drop down quietly, and pass Prescott with muffled oars. The night was a little hazy, but not dark.

My boat was ahead, and it was as large as a schooner. As soon as we were discovered, a heavy fire was opened upon us without effect, striking only one boat, killing one man, and wounding two. They kept up their fire until after we had all passed.

They fired, during the night, fourteen hundred rounds at our six hundred craft. We dropped down to White House, where we ferried the army across to the Canada shore and swam the horses. We were now near the head of the Longue Saut rapids; the enemy was in possession of the shore. Six strong detachments marched for a point five miles above Cornwall at the foot of the rapids to secure the passage. When they arrived they were to notify us by the roar of cannon, but the first roar of cannon that we heard was from the enemy which had followed us from Kingston. They attacked and drove in our pickets and appeared in force.

Our line of battle was soon formed, and the battle of Williamsburg, or Chrysler's Field, began. Quartermaster-General Swarthout, acting as Brigadier, advanced his brigade from our right; the enemy fell back in line with their forces extending from the woods to the river.

The action became warm and general. Major ———, who commanded the boat guard of five hundred men with whom he had dropped down past Prescott, requested me to go to General Boyd on the field for orders. I reported to General Boyd; his answer was to remain and protect the boats, baggage, women, etc. I reported to Major Upham, who dismissed the guards to their different boats. Being senior Captain, my command was in the rear nearest to the enemy and the field of battle. In a few minutes, Col. N. Pinkney, aide to General Wilkinson, who was at that time sick on board of his vessel, directed me to form my guard and march to the field. I immediately formed, eighty-six strong, including one of my pilots who volunteered (a fine fellow he was).

When we approached General Boyd near the field, he said, "Rush on my 'jolly snorters,' you are wanted." Before forming into line, I halted a moment to let my men go into action coolly.

Giving them a few directions, I marched them into line. We met Colonel Cutting with his regiment helter skelter, just broken out of line. "Colonel," said I, "where are you going?" Said he, "my men will not stand;" "but," said I, "you are leading them." They went off to the boats and I took the place of the regiment with my little detachment of eighty-six. I soon saw Major Malcom, and got permission to take position in a field on the enemy's right flank, where my "buck and ball" told well. My position was within two hundred yards of the right flank; my men kneeled on the left knee behind a stone wall about two feet high. I was already wounded by a musket ball passing through my left arm two inches below the socket. I received the wound while advancing, and, no doubt from excitement, believed it to be a chip that struck my arm. Both armies made several attempts to charge bayonets; but, as is almost always the case excepting when storming batteries, when one side charged the other fell back, and *vice versa*. At the beginning of the action, we had two pieces of field artillery under Lieutenant Smith on the river road on our left. They were taken by the enemy, and Smith and his men all killed. I did not know that they were taken until the battle was over, although I saw a detachment of dragoons wheel up to them, fire their pistols, wheel again, and retreat on receiving a fire. I supposed it to be a British attack, but found, afterwards, it was an attempt to retake the pieces by Lieut.-Col. Worth; but it was a complete failure. Our line was now out of ammunition for a short time, sixty-four rounds having been expended. The enemy formed in line and gave my little detachment a galling fire until again diverted in front. The ground was well contested for four hours on plain open ground, then the firing ceased on both sides.

There were fifteen hundred Americans against twenty-two hundred of the enemy. My wound being very painful on account of the pressure of my coat on the swelling arm, I gave the command of my sixty-three men—twenty-three having been killed—to my First Lieutenant Anderson. Our troops were returning to the boats, the enemy having fallen back. Believing the field pieces before mentioned to be in the hands of our people, I walked towards them, intending to return to the boats by the road; I was very near when I discovered the British uniforms. I immediately turned and walked leisurely towards the retiring troops. They did not fire at me or pursue me until I rose from a ravine; they

then fired, and one shot was returned by my servant, Williams, who was seeking me at some distance among the dead. He did not suspect that it was I, as he had heard that I was among the killed. It was with great difficulty, with the use of only one hand, that I got out of the ravine. I fell in with a man who had a horse and a keg of ammunition; I took the horse, and finally reached the boats. The horse was led part of the way by a camp woman. The loss in killed and wounded on both sides was not less than eight hundred, about equally divided. The result is not generally understood by our people, and it is as often called a defeat as a victory.

It was a complete victory. We proceeded down the river, but Colonel Atkinson came expressly to inform General Wilkinson that General Hampton could not meet us at Salmon Creek with men and supplies as agreed; for he had made an attempt to take or destroy a force at old Chateauguay, at the junction of that river and the St. Lawrence, been defeated, and fallen back on Plattsburgh.

This put an end to the campaign. We encamped at the junction of Salmon Creek and the St. Lawrence for some time. The place is now known as Fort Covington, named for General Covington who was killed at Chrysler's Field.

I was invited to take up my quarters at the house of Dr. Mann. I procured a horse which was led by my faithful servant Williams. When we arrived at Hitchcock's Tavern, we met a small party at dinner, among them, Miss Charlotte Bailey of Plattsburgh, your mother, who was then visiting her uncle, Dr. Mann. I finally reached Dr. Mann's house, where I had a comfortable room, and was shown every attention by the family. General Wilkinson and several other officers stopped at the Doctor's house for a few days on their way to Malone.

My wound had been neglected, and I had taken a severe cold by remaining on duty. A fever ensued, and I suffered everything but death. At one time, the Doctor feared that he could not save me. The army fell back on Plattsburgh early in December, and in March, I was so far recovered as to be able to follow.

In this month I was married to Charlotte, daughter of Judge William Bailey. I was then under orders to proceed as a witness before a Court-Martial sitting at New York for the trial of General Gaines. When at New York my order was extended at my request, by Governor Tompkins, allowing me to go to Washington to settle my recruiting accounts. I returned to Plattsburgh in the

beginning of April. In May, 1813, the army advanced to Odletown, within three miles of the British outposts, near Champlain. At this time Commodore McDonough advanced his squadron to Chazy. There was some skirmishing with the enemy's outposts, but nothing of importance occurred during the two or three weeks that we remained there.

I was soon ordered to Plattsburgh. All the forces that could be spared were forwarded to the relief of General Brown, who was closely besieged at Fort Erie.

We had a fatiguing march of seventeen days; then, we received news of the successful sortie at Fort Erie, and the victories of Chippeway and Lundy's Lane, and it became unnecessary for me to go up the lake. We went into winter quarters and spent the winter of 1814 in tents. In the spring, General Brown told me that I was entitled to promotion, that he would send me to New York on special duty to return by way of Plattsburgh, at which place I was to take command of the companies of the 13th and march them to the regiments. On my arrival at Plattsburgh, I reported to General Macomb. He said that he would add a company to the two of the 13th and give me the command as a battalion.

But he suggested that I might like to go to Franklin County for a time, as my wife was there visiting Dr. Mann, and I could procure valuable information there respecting the intended movements of the enemy in that direction, and in upper Canada. I went there and frequently rode to St. Regis and over the line, and I procured much valuable information at the risk of a halter for a neckcloth.

I returned to Plattsburgh and reported to General Macomb. His battalion was not yet formed, and I remained there in camp until the news of peace was received. The men enlisted to serve eighteen months, and therefore, during the war, were to be discharged. But no money had been provided to pay the armies.

They were mutinous, and many of the companies refused to obey their officers. Among them, the two companies of the 13th claimed their pay and discharge, and when ordered to unstack arms, they disobeyed their officers to a man. I was called upon to address them. I reminded them of their services, and called on them not to tarnish the honor they had won by duty and discipline. I told them to continue to obey orders and to keep up the usual

discipline for which the regiment had been noted, and that as soon as funds were received by the paymasters they should be paid, and such as were entitled to it should receive their honorable discharge. I now gave the word, "unstack arms." They complied, and I marched them over to the artillery who were under arms. We there drummed out of camp all who disobeyed the orders of their officers, and many of those who regretted their disobedience, were restored at my suggestion. In June, a board of officers was formed at Washington to reduce the army to a Peace Establishment, and a rule was made that *none but effective officers should be retained*. All who had been wounded or disabled should be discharged with an allowance of three months gratuitous pay—reversing common sense and common justice rule that all who had been wounded or disabled should be retained to form skeleton regiments, which could at any time be filled with recruits.

Many of the officers petitioned to be retained, and some were retained and reduced one grade. Many of us met and determined, after debate, that as we had seen service and done our duty, we would neither petition to be retained, nor accept with reduced rank. At the request of the Colonel, I remained on duty with my regiment until September. I then went to Washington to close my accounts. Paymaster-General Brant refused, at first, to pay me beyond the fourteenth of June. After considerable difficulty, I obtained pay to the tenth day of September in Pittsburgh banknotes, which sold at eleven per cent. discount at New York. So I lost eleven per cent. on eleven months' pay. Thus were we rewarded.

I now returned to private life at the age of thirty-eight. After having settled my accounts at Washington, I returned to Plattsburgh and procured board for my wife and child—my daughter Henrietta—at John Palmers. I then went to New York with about one hundred dollars to begin the world anew. After several weeks, and with much difficulty, I became engaged in the auction business.

I was aided by a friend for whom I had laid the foundation of a fortune which he had realized during my absence. My prospects looked encouraging, when a former lieutenant of my regiment, Charles Mitchell, called upon me for aid. He was destitute of means to pay even his board. I gave him what help I could, promising to pay his necessary expenses until he could procure a situation. He repaid me by robbing me and forging my name for three checks, two of which were on the Manhattan Bank. They

could not determine whether the checks were forgeries or not. I had great trouble, and nearly lost my reputation—always dearer to me than money.

Mitchell, to divert my attention from himself, wrote me threatening letters, saying that he had once been in my power and that I had tyrannized over him; that I was now in his power, and that he had robbed me, forged three of my checks, would forge more, would ruin me, and perhaps take my life. He forged checks of Dr. Silas Lord, was detected, confessed all to me, and was sentenced by Judge Radcliffe, a friend of his family, to leave the State and never return.

The discharged soldiers were continually calling on me for advice in respect to their claims for back pay, pensions, and bounty lands. Several agencies commenced the business, and I among the rest. I arranged to co-operate with Col. Joseph Watson who opened an office at Washington, and we did a large business together in that way. I went on quite prosperously, and in 1817 took and furnished a small house in Walker street, went to Plattsburgh and brought down my wife. We lived there for some time, then removed to the corner of Canal and Mercer streets; we remained there two years, then removed to a three story house in Canal street where we lived until 1825, when I bought the house number 45 Mercer street and remained there until I bought Judge Vanderpool's place at Kinderhook. I was elected a member of the Assembly at New York in 1828, re-elected in 1830 for '31, again for '32, '33, and '34 (in '29 I was not elected). I was once nominated assistant alderman, and once alderman of the eighth ward; I declined both nominations. The year after I removed to Kinderhook (1834) I was elected President of the village.

During the time of my office, I received and addressed Martin Van Buren when Vice-President, and again on his return at the end of his term as President.

I have now brought this sketch of the principal events of my long life to a period from which you are all acquainted. I have been as brief as possible, though sufficiently tedious to those not personally interested. I have omitted a great variety of incidents arising out of the events of the war, as not material in this sketch of my life.

I have no memoranda to aid my memory, and this accounts for the omission of particular dates.

ADDITIONAL REMINISCENSES
OF THE
WAR OF 1812.

In March, 1812, Lieutenant Valens accompanied me from New York to my recruiting rendezvous of the 5th district at Willsborough, in Essex County.

He was a fine young officer and amiable in disposition, but he knew nothing of military tactics. I appointed him my adjutant. He was desirous of acquiring a knowledge of his duty, but when speaking of it, he used to sigh and say, "It will be of no great service to me, for I have a strong presentiment that I shall be killed in the first engagement." I used to ridicule the superstition, and endeavor to convince him of the folly of entertaining it. But it so happened that Valens was attached to the second battalion of the 13th, and at the battle of Queenstown, when crossing from Lewiston to the attack, he was heard to be in prayer in the bow of the boat; and it was not twenty minutes after landing that he was shot down by an Indian and scalped. George Helembold, my first sergeant, had the same presentiment. He was of the party that crossed the Niagara river below Black Rock to storm the British batteries.

At first, he supposed that he must be killed in accordance with his presentiment, but he soon found his error for he was brave and he did his duty manfully, and he was not killed, but taken prisoner. He soon returned on parole, with others, and being a printer, I allowed him to work in the printing office at Buffalo until exchanged. At the time, the officers of the navy boasted of their exploit in taking the two British brigs from the protection of Fort Erie. The movement was made under Lieutenant Elliot of the navy, but the force was made up equally of soldiers and sailors. Helembold wrote and published a paragraph giving each corps equal credit for the part it took in the exploit, and signed it, "a young soldier." Midshipman Tatnall called at the office to see the editor. He was absent and Helembold was in charge.

Helembold inquired the midshipman's business. Tatnall said, "I wish to know who is the author of a piece signed 'a young soldier.'"

"What is your object, sir?"

"Why, if he is a gentleman, I will treat him as such; and if not, I will treat him accordingly."

"Please state what, in your estimation, would entitle him to be considered a gentleman."

"Why, if he is a commissioned officer he is one, of course."

"But suppose, sir, that he is but a warrant officer like yourself."

"There are no warrant officers in the army."

"You are in error; all sergeants and corporals have warrants, and I have the honor to hold one as orderly sergeant of Captain Myers' company; and I fear, sir, if you were to know the name of the 'young soldier,' you could not treat him as a gentleman, and you must not meet him until he is promoted, and then, acting on your own principle, he will decide whether your rank will entitle you to his notice."

Tatnall went off in anger, and the matter ended.

When I joined the army at Greenbush, in September, 1812, I found the officers too Democratic in their intercourse even for me, bred as I had been, in the Democratic school of Jefferson. They used to enter one anothers tents, order the servants as though they were their own, and make free with the pens, ink, paper, and——— drinks. In fact, it was "hail fellow well met." My idea of military etiquette and politeness revolted at such a mode of life. I stated my views to a number of the most gentlemanly officers, who accorded with me in opinion. We agreed to establish a suitable system of gentlemanly etiquette and immediately put it in operation. This added greatly to our comfort, but much to the disappointment of those who had supposed that all was to be in common. But in a short time, all were pleased with the change.

The day the army moved from Greenbush we merely crossed the river at Albany and encamped on the first night near the first turnpike gate on the road to Schenectady. During the night one of our soldiers stole from a countryman's yard an ox chain, and, at a halt on the following day, sold it. Before we reached Schenectady, one of his comrades stole it again. In fact, the chain was stolen and sold seven or eight times before the regiment reached Buffalo.

One night we chanced to encamp near a fine poultry yard. During the evening the men cooked their rations over their respective company fires.

One man carefully boiled something in a camp kettle, and a man from another company, seeing feathers on the ground, suspected that fowl were cooking, and procuring a kettle from his own company he hung it over the same fire. When the proprietor of the fowl was out of the way for a moment the man exchanged the places of the kettles, and when requested to take his rations to his own camp fire, he went off with great docility, taking the kettle filled with the fowl and leaving his own filled with water.

One night, while encamping near Utica, some of the officers applied to Colonel Christie for permission to go to the town, but their request was refused. In revenge, they persuaded all the soldiers, officers, and men, to shave their mustaches, to the great annoyance of Colonel Christie, who had particularly desired that they should be worn.

When in command of the 5th recruiting district of Plattsburgh in July, 1812, a large body of militia came in. Two of the officers had a difference; a challenge was given and accepted, and the parties were to fight in the lake to avoid the law which disfranchised those who sent or accepted challenges in the State. The parties met according to agreement; but their friends had ingeniously arranged to load with blood instead of ball. At the given word, they fired; one of them fell, and was taken out of the water by his friend covered with blood. It was some time before he could be convinced that he was not mortally wounded.

One night while encamped at Flint Hill, three miles from Buffalo, I had just lain down in my tent on some straw covered with a buffalo skin, the whole resting on muddy ground—for it was in October, 1812, and everything was wet on and about us, as it had been raining more or less for ten days—I was called to meet the captains and subalterns of the brigade on the right of the line.

Captain Brooke (now General Brooke) addressed the unlawful assemblage nearly as follows: "Gentlemen, and fellow soldiers; we all came here to fight and to conquer the enemy, not to remain here suffering every want and privation, under the orders of General Smyth, useless to ourselves and to our Country. Six

weeks I have been on the lines. My friends expected to hear from me before this; what can they hear, but that we are living inactively in our tents at Flint Hill in rain, mud, and want; eating grass seed and beef without salt, wearing soiled shirts for want of soap to wash them, and without candle light. Here, some one observed, "Brooke, you have no fortitude." "Have I not," said Brooke, and putting the forefinger of his right hand into the blaze of the company fire before us, he held it there until it was deeply burned.

"Now, gentlemen," said he, "I propose that each captain take full command of his company, and that the senior captain of the brigade lead us to, and across the river, that we may take Fort Erie by storm, proceed to Chippeway, and thence to Fort George and take that—and leave General Smyth to sleep the night out in his snug quarters."

All, for different reasons, agreed to this. The paymaster of the 5th said, "Gentlemen, General Parker, my relative, is in camp, and I have no doubt that, if a deputation calls upon him, he will join us and lead us on to glory."

Accordingly, Brooke, three others and I, were appointed. We moved towards his marquee. But a private message was sent to General Parker to inform him of what was going on. The General received us very kindly, approved of the plan, and ordered refreshments. The effect of good, old brandy was to make the gentlemen very drowsy. They drank freely, and soon the whole mutiny and expedition were forgotten; and General Parker, an excellent man, never mentioned it, I believe, and it passed off harmlessly.

Once, while we were at Fort George, Major ——— (since promoted) was ordered to march with three companies of infantry to ascertain when the British picket guard, opposite to our picket on the swamp road, was stationed. Mine was one of the companies. We marched about a mile and halted. The Major told me to march on until I drew out the enemy's guard, and then to fall back on his other two companies.

I did so, and half a mile farther on I found the guard. It turned out in full force and I made a false retreat, but when I got back to my supplies there were no two companies, nor even a man to inform me where they had gone. I marched on and found them in camp. The Major said that he had supposed that I had returned by a different road, not recollecting that to have done so, I should have disobeyed orders. It passed quietly

One night we encamped in a swamp. Lieut. J. C. Eldridge and I mounted a barrel of whiskey back to back for a lodging. In about an hour I heard a noise, and, looking around, I found that the men were pulling Eldridge out of the fire. It appeared that when we were both asleep, I overbalanced him and he fell into the fire. Fortunately, he was not much burned.

When encamped at Cumberland Head, Lake Champlain, I was walking on the bank one morning and I saw a soldier lying in a fire on the beach. I jumped down about eight feet and pulled him out—a little burned. He was not entirely sober, but he thanked me and walked off. Some years after he came to my office in Wall Street, New York, related the circumstance and said that I had, no doubt, saved his life. It is a great happiness to have it in our power to save a life.

I had a soldier named Clark who was a noted thief. While encamped at Northfields, near Champlain, Clinton County, he robbed the sutler of the 14th Regiment of all his goods, valued at fourteen hundred dollars. He gave away most of the goods. He was detected, tried, and condemned to have his pay stopped to make good what he had taken; and when the Paymaster was paying the men, he would come to me with tears in his eyes and beg me for a dollar. I always gave it to him. He was an excellent soldier in all other respects, but he was by nature a thief.

Poor, weak human nature! We require discipline and firmness to resist our natural propensities.

It would naturally be supposed that, if any class of men is free from superstition, it is sailors and soldiers; but, as a rule, I have found the latter to be much under the influence of it. I had in my company a young Irishman whose bravery was never doubted; but while I was commanding the Cantonment at Williamsville, in the winter of 1812, a report was one morning current that O'Bryan had seen the Devil, when on post at the sally-port leading to the graveyard. Fearing that others might feel alarmed on going on the same post, I sent for O'Bryan and said to him, "It is said that you saw the Devil last night when on post." He turned very pale and said, "I do not know whether it was the Devil, but something black, about the size of a horse without a head, came rolling towards me. I challenged, but received no answer; it was light, and I plainly saw it still approaching; I sighted my piece to fire, but lost my strength and

fell back against the Cantonment where the relief soon after found me." I said, "Are you afraid to go on the same post, at the same hour tonight with me? Perhaps we may find that there was no Devil, but your own fear of spirits." He said, "Sir, I have never known fear, and I am willing to go with or without you—but I should prefer to have you go with me." I went, and we remained on post two hours; but the black devil in the shape of a horse without a head did not renew his visit, and my having been on post with O'Bryan was known to all the command, and it satisfied all that they might go on that post without meeting "His Satanic Majesty."

At the formation of the American Army of 1812, there was a great rush for appointments.

Many desired to join it from high minded notions of national honor, or patriotism; others from motives of pride and love of military show and splendor, and many for employment and pay. Many were recommended by Members of Congress without much regard to their qualifications for command; so that at the recruiting service, and the assemblage of the troops at Greenbush, in the autumn of 1812, we found a gathering of heterogeneous characters bearing commissions—men taken from every grade of society, from the highest to the lowest. But all felt the same pride. The most ignorant were the most jealous of their honor—so far, at least, as to take offence at the least circumstance or even word that seemed to them to reflect on their courage. Challenges to single combat were of frequent occurrance. There are, occasionally, insults offered, or injuries inflicted for which the law affords no satisfaction; and it then becomes necessary for a man to take the matter into his own hands. But in most cases, duels are fought for trifling wrongs, or imaginary offences, and promoted by injudicious friends of the parties, from false pride and a desire to become conspicuous in such matters; when in ten cases out of twelve the affairs might be amicably adjusted by well disposed friends, and so save the lives and the honor of well meaning but hot-headed men. It was my lot to be engaged in several affairs of the kind both before and after I became an officer in the regular army, and I look back with great satisfaction at many differences amicably arranged between those who, without a friend so disposed, would have lost their lives in silly combat, or have taken the lives of their opponents.

But in some few cases of aggravated controversies, I did not succeed in making settlements, and duels resulted. (See appendix.)

In a few cases challenges were refused, and the person refusing was justified by the whole army.

When the army lay at Fort George, Upper Canada, in 1813, Lieut.-Col. Wintield Scott was ordered out with a command of men to the head of Lake Ontario to take or destroy the British public stores at Burlington Bay—in which enterprise he was particularly successful. Colonel Homer Milton considered that as he ranked Scott the command belonged to him. A correspondence took place which resulted in a challenge from Colonel Milton. Scott declined in words to this effect:

"I have no personal difference with Colonel Milton; if a command has been given to me in preference to him, he should apply to the commanding general who directed his adjutant-general to give me the order. But if the Colonel desires to test my courage, I prefer to show it to him in the face of the enemy when we are at the head of our respective commands."

When the troops under Gen. Stephen Van Rensselaer crossed the Niagara to take Queenstown, a lieutenant of light artillery named Randolph, who had no command in the expedition, jumped into the boat of one of the captains of the 13th Infantry and crossed over to Queenstown where he had command of the advance of the 13th Infantry.

The circumstance was mentioned to Lieut.-Col. Christie, who observed that he had no knowledge of Mr. Randolph, or that he had any command in the 13th Infantry.

Randolph, a fine, spirited young man sent a challenge to Colonel Christie, who was then at the head of his regiment near Fort Niagara preparing for the invasion of Canada.

Christie sent for a few of his captains to consult. We advised him—considering their relative ranks, the circumstances giving rise to the challenge and the responsibility of his position at that time—to decline. He was also posted, but he was justified by most of the officers.

Randolph, having spoken of the matter, was informed that there were eight captains in Christie's regiment who resented the same remarks that their Colonel did; that all were nearer his rank, and that he might call upon any of them, if he pleased. No more was said or done.

APPENDIX.

One of the duels referred to by Major Myers was between Surgeon Bronaugh and Major Stonard; copies of the letter of Dr. Bronaugh conveying the challenge is given below, and also a copy of the arrangements made by the seconds for the hostile meeting

CAMP, NEAR FORT NIAGARA,
12th May, 1813.

SIR: Your contemptible evasion of a direct challenge I shall take the liberty of construing into an act of base cowardice unbecoming the station you hold in the army, and an aggravation of the offence for which I have demanded an honorable reparation at your hands. The whole history of the affair of which I complain characterizes you a victim of a feebleness of judgment and a vindictiveness of disposition that fitted you to be the tool of a designing scoundrel, more base and cowardly perhaps than yourself, and in which he manifested himself superior to you only in consummate hypocrisy. It is now obvious to every unprejudiced person that Colonel Coles, your co-adjutor in the holy work of "motives of duty and the good of the public service," was the prime mover of the charges preferred against me; that he was anxious, in conjunction with you, to get the officers of the regiment to sign them, but they, feeling too much independence to sacrifice their judgment at the shrine of malice, refused to unite in a coalition, the object of which was my downfall, and not "motives of duty and the good of the public service." And no one being found supple enough to put his name to those charges but you sir, and you I hold responsible for the outrage committed on my feelings—your devotion to Colonel Cole blinded you to a sense of justice, and your milk and water apology (?) made through my friend convinces me that you have adopted the maxim "that the holiness of the end will sanctify the most dishonorable means," and that you hoped for absolution from guilt if by serving the purposes of one man you could injure another whom you had professed to respect

I am not to be appeased, sir, by the atonement you have attempted to make, it is not equivalent to the injury, and unless you give the satisfaction I demand I shall denounce you to the world as a base, rotten-hearted coward, who is neither soldier, officer nor gentleman, and I shall make my first letter addressed to you and this also, through the medium of the Buffalo Gazette, a matter of publicity to the world.

Yours, etc.,

JAMES C. BRONAUGH,
Surgeon, 12th Infantry.

Major JOHN STONARD,
20th Infantry.

13th May, 1813.

The parties will meet tomorrow morning at 7 o'clock on the lake shore about one quarter of a mile from camp, they will take their distance at ten paces, face to face, they will stand with their pistols pointed downwards; the question is to be asked "are you ready?" on an answer in the affirmative the word "fire" is to be given; they are to raise their pistols and discharge them; it is to be considered that they are to discharge their pistols within one minute of the word "fire" or lose their fire. After the first shot they are to advance one pace each, after the second one more pace each, and so on until one of the shots takes effect, and so on until one of the parties declares he is unable to fire; each of the parties to be accompanied with two friends and a surgeon and none others.

R. WHARTENBY,
M. MYERS.

With the above remarks upon duelling the series of letters from which these reminiscences are selected, closes; and with the end of the war, Major Myers' military career ended. He afterward resided in New York City and Schenectady; he twice represented New York City in the Legislature of the State for six years, and served two terms as Mayor of Schenectady; he was a candidate for Congress when eighty-four years old. He was present at the inauguration of Washington as President by Chancellor Livingston, and retains a vivid recollection of that event. He was probably one of the most prominent Masons of his day, having been Grand Master and Grand High Priest, respectively, of the Grand Lodge and Grand Chapter of the State of New York.

Major Myers died at Schenectady, January 20, 1871. The *Schenectady Times*, on the occasion of his funeral, says: "Major Myers was in many respects a remarkable man. He was possessed of a clear mind, strong will, and the fact that, with all the hardships incident to the life of a soldier in war of 1812, he lived to be nearly ninety-six years of age, is proof that he possessed a strong and robust constitution. His physical appearance was striking. No stranger ever met him or passed him on the street without noticing his appearance; he was of very large proportions and had a clear and keen black eye, giving evidence of the strong intellectual power of the man. As Mayor of this city he added dignity to the office, and brought all the power of his common sense and an indomitable will to bear against wrong, and in favor of right and justice."

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